DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 611 FL 801 419

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TITLE Using the Internet for ESL Beginners.
PUB DATE 2000-07-00
NOTE 13p.
AVAILABLE FROM J. Diamond Adult Learning Resource Center, 1855 Mt. Prospect Road, Des Plaines, IL. Tel: 847-803-3535; e-mail: jdiamond@irc-desplaines.org.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *Computer Uses in Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); *Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *World Wide Web

ABSTRACT

This brief paper argues for using the Internet for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction. Students of all ages and levels share an enthusiasm for exploring information and interacting online, and the often heard conventional wisdom that the Internet is too difficult for all but the most advanced ESL students is not true. ESL teachers need pictures, sound files, and videos to support their language teaching, and many are eager to share their lesson plans, activities, and curricula. The Internet is a fantastic resource for all these needs. Several ESL-friendly and useful Web sites are described and suggested. Great sources for "downloadable" photos, drawings, clip art, graphics, and java games are also suggested. A table entitled "Beginning ESL Internet Sites" providing a name, URL, and description for 22 sites is appended. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (KFT)

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Using the Internet for ESL Beginners

By Judith Diamond

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Using the Internet for ESL Beginners

The Internet is a resource that conjures up very different images depending on who uses it. An American game player challenges his Russian counterpart to a game of Doom. A professor finds supporting research. A housewife looks for recipes or joins a chat group on raising children. …Or perhaps it is the professor playing Doom and the housewife doing research. The very flexibility and depth of the Internet defies stereotyping.

One stereotype that I often hear, as an ESL teacher, is that the Internet is much too hard for any but the most advanced ESL students. This is simply not true. ESL students of all levels share the worldwide enthusiasm for exploring information and interacting online. ESL teachers need pictures, sound files, and videos to support their language teaching. Many are eager to share lesson plans, activities and curriculums. The Internet can be a fantastic resource for all. It only takes a little imagination and courage. Let's dive in.

A good entry gate for both teachers and students is Dave's ESL Café www.eslcafe.com Students can access penpal lists, grammar exercises and examples, vocabulary lessons and English games. Teachers can talk to other teachers, follow links to activities, and download lesson plans. Another useful long-term site is Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab at www.esl-lab.com, a storehouse of leveled audio snippets of conversation, dialogs and anecdotes. A good in-depth ESL directory listing a wide variety of ESL net resources is at esl.about.com. About.com specializes in human-researched guides in many different categories.

The best method, however, of finding the most current ESL sites on the Internet is by intelligent searching. (The average life span of an Internet address is eighteen months with sites moving, combining, altering and sometimes just flickering out.) The search engine that I find most efficient, at this time, is Google: www.google.com. With the words, *ESL beginner links*, in the search field, the ESL teacher can access an almost endless selection of ESL web materials.

ESL providers without computers can still download lessons plans (try, *ESL lesson plans* as a search term), stories and pictures. One of my favorite tales is "Do Spiders Live on the World Wide Web" which is a very simple and amusing graphical introduction to computer terminology: www.ipl.org/youth/StoryHour/spiders/netpg.html
If the story, by the time you read this, is gone, just reduce the URL to www.ipl.org/youth/StoryHour/ for the current collection. *Simple "stories online" links* will bring up other sites with stories that are appropriate for lower level ESL students. Don't forget to use the quotation marks to narrow the search to stories online instead of any commercially available story. Teachers can print out, copy and distribute the stories to their students as long as the site does not forbid it. With computer access, students can read the stories online and then react together in the classroom.

All beginning ESL classes rely heavily on pictures to develop and reinforce vocabulary. The Internet is an excellent source for these pictures. Choose the picture type and

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category and then enter one of the following searches in the format, key word (subject), e.g. *photos animals*

- *Photos (category)*
- *Drawings (category)*
- *Clipart (category)*
- *Graphics (category)*

When you find a picture you like, right click the mouse and then, in the dropdown menu, click: *Save as (picture, image)*. Choose a spot on your computer, and save the picture to your hard drive. It then can be inserted into a word processing document and printed. Remember to make sure that the site allows the picture to be copied. If there is no information about copying onsite, an email request can obtain the necessary permission.

With or without Internet access, if computers are available for students, teachers can find shareware or freeware to use. Shareware and freeware are small software programs often developed specifically for ESL classes. Freeware is free; shareware is a "try before you buy" promise. Just enter *ESL shareware* as the search term. Find the shareware that is most applicable for your students and click "download." Place the file on the desktop, virus check it, and then unzip and install. There are exercises, story makers, dictionaries, games and all sorts of other useful small programs.

If students can go online, either at home, in a lab, or in class; the Internet is full of communicative possibilities. Enter the following terms in the search field:

- *Chatterbots*. These imaginary web people conduct conversations with users. Practice dialogues, exchange introductions, ask questions and get a response just as if there really was a small person living in the computer. Students can control the topic and the level of English. Some of the chatterbots are better than others, It may take a little experimentation to find the best for your students.

- *Ecards*. Students can choose a picture and send a message to the teacher, other students or family members here or abroad. It doesn't take much English to say: "Hi, how are you," or "I hope you are feeling better." Even the lowest level students love to send and receive ecards.

- *Java games*. Playing any of the many Internet games reinforces vocabulary and increases fluency. No special download is necessary for Java games. Installing a small utility, Shockwave/Shockwave Flash, increases the options for interactivity and selection. Go to the Macromedia Shockwave and Flash Player Download Center: sdc.shockwave.com/shockwave/download and follow the instructions. Then try *Shockwave games* as your search term. A good choice for beginners, available in many formats on the web, is Mastermind. The computer thinks of a choice of color combinations from four possibilities. The player must guess the colors and the order. One player begins by giving instructions to the second player, e.g. "green, red, yellow, red." The computer will indicate which colors and locations are correct. Then the players

exchange places and, using the feedback, guess again. As long as the students can name colors, they can play the game.

- *"flight schedules" online*. Numbers and simple questions using "When" and "Where" are usually in the ESL beginner's curriculum. Printing out or using a schedule on line provides students with the opportunity to exchange information in a set format, e.g. "What time does the 8:10 flight to New York arrive?" Also try *train schedules*, *football schedules*, etc. A site, presently available, with links to schedules is dmoz.org/Recreation/Travel/Reservations/Air/Airlines/.

- *weather forecast*. Along with the national forecast, some sites let the user click a location for lists of current temperatures. Frequently, very local information is available by a click on a state and then a town. Beginners can take turns asking and answering specific questions such as "What will the weather be on Wednesday?" "What was the highest temperature yesterday?" "When will it rain this week?"

- Students enjoy sites that graphically display user choices. "Discuss Your Design Personality" at the Wear-Dated site: www.weardated.com directs the user to select carpet and furnishings and place them in a room. At Land's End clothing www.landsend.com, users enter options and create a model person, which they can then clothe with current fashions. With a computer projector, the whole class can practice "the blue chair," or "brown hair and green eyes." Once vocabulary is known and comfortable, pairs can work together to create their own designs.

The Internet as a resource is available to all, students and teachers at any stage of learning. It provides information and resources unavailable in any other medium. It just takes a little knowledge and a little imagination. Look at the lesson plans other teachers have developed, download pictures, sounds, and software, and have the confidence to encourage students to experiment whatever their level.

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Reaching Out

Integrating Internet activities for beginning ESL students into the curriculum

Purpose: Learning parts of the body
Learning contrasting adjectives
Learning about health

Activity I Envelopes with five pictures cards of parts of the face (i.e. one envelope has five ears, another has five mouths etc.) are passed out. Each student or pair of students has to make a face. They circulate and ask for cards until their face is completed.

Internet I Mr. Potato Head: do in pairs, one student directs the other to complete Mr. Potato Head. (Other vegetable names may also be taught)

Activity II Students take turns calling out a part of the body to another student who must touch that part and then call out to someone else. (look at the Cartoon Figure handout for vocabulary.)

Internet II Cartoon Figure: Students see if they can identify the parts on the cartoon.

Internet III Word Dragon: Unscramble the body part names; work in pairs or threes.

Activity III Take objects and order them according to adjective pairs (i.e. short, long).

Internet IV Cartoon-O-Matic: Create your own cartoon face using the adjectives.

Activity and Internet
Use the downloaded pictures from the Internet to discuss health and doctor visits.

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Reaching Out 2

Integrating Internet activities for beginning ESL students into the curriculum

Purpose: Learning prepositions
Learning directions
Learning present and present continuous tense

Activity I Use the fish figures to illustrate above, below, beside, in front of.

Activity II Have students model the prepositions. Contrast present and present continuous with motion and lack of motion.

Internet I Fish Tank: Look at the virtual fish tank and as a class describe where one fish is as it moves using the present continuous: "The red fish is swimming in front of the blue fish."

Internet II Kitty Wants a Box: Use projector to show class or print out. Have students describe each picture.

Activity III Have students direct each other to a location or person in the room by using prepositions and left, right etc.

Internet III Spacequest: move the figure in the direction requested.

Internet IV Talking about Daily Routines: Have students talk or write, where Harold is in the pictures.

Activity IV Introduce vocabulary and develop a list of a typical daily routine.

Internet V Talking About Daily Routines: Listen to Harold's daily routine and attempt the fill-ins. (This may have to be done as a class first.)

Activity V Write your own daily routine.

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Beginning ESL Internet Sites

NAME	URL	DESCRIPTION
Animal Game	**www.animalgame.com/animal/animal.shtml**	**Think of an animal. The computer asks you questions. You answer. It guesses your animal. Fun!**
Cartoon Figure	**www.kjc.kindai.ac.jp/seikatu/english/kindergarten/body.html**	**This silly cartoon figure nevertheless gives really good practice in identifying and spelling parts of the body.**
Cartoon-o-matic	**www.nfx.com/cgi-bin/livingart**	**Create your own cartoon face.**
Chatting with Alison	**www.sirkussystem.com/chat/alison**	**This attractive chatbot will answer any questions you type in.**
ClipArt for Foreign Language Classes	**www.sla.purdue.edu/fll/JapanProj/FLClipart**	**Just as it says: here are over a hundred drawings that may be enlarged by a click and printed out.**
Crash; Spacequest	**www.ccaa.com.br/agenteweb/jogos/safeEng01.htm**	**Fill in the correct numbers or crash! Shockwave games.**
Dave's ESL Café	**www.eslcafe.com**	**Every ESL teacher should visit Dave's Café.**
Easy Vocabulary Quizzes With Pictures	www.aitech.ac.jp/~itesls/vq/	**Look at three drawings and select the correct vocabulary word, then check yourself.**
Ebony's Likes and Dislikes	**www.englishlistening.com/contents.phtml**	**This is a nice audio tape of a person listing what she likes and does not like. "Dawn's Family" and "A Young Woman's Diet" are also good.**
Fish Tank	**www.petlanddiscounts.com/fishtank.htm**	**See a simple, animated fish tank.**

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Fruit NIM	www.2020tech.com/fruit/	**Play a game with the computer taking away fruit from the graphic. The last person to take wins.**
Image Search Tools	www.rcls.org/psearch.htm	**This is a good listing of the best image search engines.**
Kitty Wants a Box	www.pacificnet.net/~cmoore/cat/index.htm	**This picture story introduces prepositions.**
Mexico Photo Page	www.fortunecity.com/victorian/wooton/34/mexphotos/photos.html	**Find many pictures of Mexico here.**
Mr. Potato Head (1)	apple-corps.westnet.com/~~apple-corps~~.2.html Apple_Corps	**This could be an interactive potato head, apple head, orange head etc.**
Mr. Potato Head (2)	php.iupi.edu/~kcarmony/klingon/dumplinks/potato.html	**Just drag and drop the face parts on this potato.**
Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab	www.esl-lab.com/	**This famous site provides audio dialogues for all levels on a variety of topics.**
Spelling Lessons	eslus.com/LESSONS/SPELL/SPELL.HTM	**Fill in the blank with the spelling word. In Part b, pick the right spelling. There are all levels here.**
Talking About Daily Routines	grove.ufl.edu/~ktrickel/teslmini/activity.html	**Look at the cartoon picture story, listen and fill in the blank below.**
The Colorful Clothesline	hub1.worlded.org/teachers/using/md99/clothing/index.html	**Identify colors and clothes through pictures and multiple choice.**
Time Pictures	www.timepix.com	**Time Magazine pictures for sale here. Teachers may make one copy of any of the many, many pictures.**
Vietnam Picture Archive	http://metalab.unc.edu/vietnam	**Beautiful pictures of Vietnam and its people are at this site.**
Virtual Aquarium	www.tetra-fish.com	**Design your own moving virtual aquarium**

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Word Dragon	**www.worddragon.org**	**Create your own puzzle.**
Word Soup	**www.englishday.com/word_soup/word_soup.htm**	**See a scrambled word (months, animals, foods etc.), try to unscramble it. Clicking on the scramble will give the answer.**
Working in English	**www.grand.k12.ut.us/esl/home.html**	**These are short easy dialogues. Listen to one speaker at a time as often as needed.**
Yahoo Weather	**weather.yahoo.com/forecast/**	**Choose your city and see the forecast with colorful graphical layout and clear numbers.**